

## “Spiritual Roots” Micah 5:2-5a Advent Midweek #3 2021

During these Advent midweek services, we have considered God’s Old Testament people as they strayed away from God’s will. Two weeks ago, we surveyed the moral roller coaster ride of the Children of Israel as they went through cycles of faithfulness and then rebellion against God’s law. Last week we surveyed the faithfulness of Judah after the Persians gave them permission to return from exile.

The history of Israel before and after the exile demonstrates how easy it is to stray away from God and His will. We can lose our way so easily. It can happen so slowly and incrementally that we don’t even realize what’s happening. Sometimes we proceed on track, following our life’s map, as it were. Often, we get off track, because, well, life happens, and things pull us this way and that. And we can find ourselves far away from the course we had set.

This can happen to our spiritual lives, too. We receive baptism into the death and resurrection of Christ as infants, totally dependent on God’s grace, his action in Christ, for us. As children we are dependent on others, but then we grow up. We become adults. We provide more and more for ourselves. It is tempting to do the same thing spiritually ... to rely on ourselves instead of God. We start to think God needs our help; we evaluate our spiritual life on what we have done for God instead of what God has done for us.

We take our confirmation vows to remain faithful, even unto death. Then comes high school, and university, and, well, life happens. Without even noticing, we can find ourselves quite a distance away from God, his Word, his will, his way.

From time-to-time God must send messengers to His people to warn them that they have wandered off ... to bring the Holy Spirit inspired Word to remind them of the gifts God has for them. This is really what had happened in the time of Micah, the prophet of our text. The kings of the house of David acted as though they were the real kings, not the servants of God for the kingdom of God. The people had become more interested in themselves, in their own success, and not in serving God and their neighbor.

God gave hard words to His prophets. *“Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and said to all the people of Judah: ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, “Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall*

*become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.’’*  
(Jeremiah 26:18, ESV)

Yet their message was not without hope. They spoke of a new king, another son of David. But there was also a sense that the new king was not just another David, as though maybe just one more generation was needed to get it all back on track. No, this was not just about going forward, this was a message of going back, remembering where they came from, and getting back on course.

For the king, this meant remembering David and his humble beginnings, back in his home town of Bethlehem. This wasn't "David's royal city" then. It was a small rural town, and Jesse and his sons were shepherds. Remember that Samuel looked for a son to anoint as king, and they brought past him all the sons but David – he was the youngest and was out in the fields doing his work. He wasn't even under consideration, but he was the one.

Of course, when he became king, David himself quickly outgrew his humility. It didn't take long for the house of David to get off course. And God would have to find them, having lost their way, and get them back. Back to the beginning. Back to Bethlehem. Back to a new birth of a new king.

And so would be born one who would be ruler in Israel (interesting that Micah doesn't call him "king"). His origins, and his "goings forth" (that is to say, where he came from and where he was going) was part of God's everlasting plan to send a savior and save the world, save the church, save you and me, from our irresistible tendency and temptation to get ourselves lost, to get off course, to wander from God's plan even though we still think we are God's people.

In our text today, on our last Midweek of Advent, God calls us to consider our spiritual roots. Some of you were baptized at the baptismal font here in Redeemer. Others were baptized at Logan or at Tavistock. Still others were baptized in other churches in other places, but again, in the waters of holy baptism, which is the same power of God unto salvation wherever and whenever it comes to his people.

As we prepare to celebrate our Savior's birth, we recall that little town of Bethlehem, not for the sentimental scenes we might find on cards but for the holy history that it conveys: this was the birthplace, of the kingdom of God, for Christ is the Kingdom of God in human flesh. God Himself went back to

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the basics ... in Bethlehem. Finally, this descendant of David got it right. No losing His way. No selfish self-interests. This *Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.* (Matthew 20:28, *ESV*)

He was God’s true king: David’s son but also David’s lord. He would come to his capital city in royal procession and be crowned with a crown of thorns. He would take upon himself the sin and suffering for all, to bear our sin and be our Savior, securing God’s forgiveness for all our own sin and self-interest. He would be raised again, ascended to his heavenly throne, where he lives and reigns to all eternity, for us and for our salvation.

As we bring the last Midweek of this Advent season to a close, we draw nearer to the celebration of God in a manger. It is good for us to take our preparation back to our beginnings ... back to the baptismal waters where it all started for you and for me. There we received our own new life. There the Christmas message became a lasting truth for our lives. There we became God’s people, forgiven, to live under him in his kingdom, and to serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness! Amen